

GUN VIOLENCE IN ILLINOIS'S
FIRST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

HON. JONATHAN L. JACKSON

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart in the aftermath of another mass shooting in Tennessee that claimed 6 lives, including 3 innocent children. I stand here as a representative of a district plagued by the epidemic of gun violence.

Chicago, our beloved city, suffers from a firearm homicide rate that overshadows other major U.S. cities. From 2018 to 2022, almost 14,000 shooting incidents have scarred our communities and shattered countless families.

As I speak on this matter, I must emphasize the disproportionate impact on our Black communities. In our state of Illinois, Black individuals are 32 times more likely to die by gun homicide than their White counterparts, a rate triple the national average. This is not just a statistic; it is a heart-wrenching reality and a gross injustice that we must confront and dismantle with unyielding determination.

Our children, the beacons of hope for our future, suffer most in the face of this violence. Firearms are the leading cause of death for children in Illinois, claiming an average of 183 young lives each year. The stark truth is that in Illinois, Black children and teens are 13 times more likely to die from gun violence than their White peers. Around 60 percent of Chicago's youngest children live in communities where 91 percent of homicides took place.

Our children's mental health continues to deteriorate under the burden of fear and anxiety from exposure to gun violence. Over 1 in 4 parents report their children hearing gunshots at home, and 1 in 5 parents say their children's mental health has been negatively affected.

It is our responsibility as lawmakers and leaders to bring forth meaningful change. We must start by implementing comprehensive background checks, closing the gun show loophole, and investing in mental health services for those affected by gun violence. We must pass the assault weapons ban to remove military-style weapons from our streets, prohibit unlicensed firearm ownership, and mandate that firearms transfers occur only with a valid license.

Additionally, we must establish and maintain a federal record of sale system and conduct fingerprint-based nationwide criminal background checks. Had these measures been in place, the gunman who killed 5 people in Aurora, IL in 2019 might have been prevented from acquiring the firearm used in the shooting.

Our children, our communities, and our Nation deserve better. We must be relentless in our pursuit of a safer, brighter future. Let us be united in our resolve, with hearts full of passion and eyes set on the prize of a peaceful tomorrow. Together, we can turn the tide of gun violence and restore hope to our great Nation.

Mr. Speaker, let us join hands in this righteous fight.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE OF AJ
GUNTHER

HON. ROBERT J. WITTMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Allen "AJ" Gunther and his service to Virginia's First District and the Nation.

Prior to joining my office, AJ served as a Chaplain in the U.S. Army where he participated in humanitarian operations in Haiti, as well as a tour in Afghanistan and South Korea. He now serves as a Chaplain in the U.S. Army Reserves.

AJ joined my Tappahannock office in April 2021 as a Wounded Warrior Program Fellow and served in that role until April 2023. He helped resolve countless constituents' problems with federal agencies, contributing tremendously to providing the best constituent service in Virginia and the Nation. He has been a friendly and effective representative for myself, my team, and my work throughout the First Congressional District of Virginia and the Tidewater region.

I would like to thank AJ for his dedicated service over the last two years. He has been a key member of my district office team, and I wish him and his family the best as he moves on in his journey.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to join me in recognizing and thanking AJ Gunther for his service to Virginia's First District and the Nation. May God bless AJ and his family in whatever endeavors he pursues next.

HONORING THE YEARS OF SERVICE OF MS. WENDI LIPSICH IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HON. JARED MOSKOWITZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank my District Director, Ms. Wendi Lipsich, for her remarkable 26 years of public service in the House of Representatives.

Since the age of 26, Wendi has been instrumental in helping multiple Members of Congress successfully serve our constituents. Wendi launched her career as a Congressional District Director to former Congressman Robert Wexler in 1997, soon after she graduated from the University of Miami Law School. While working for Congressman Wexler, Wendi married her husband Todd, and had 2 beautiful children, Taylor and Joey.

In commemoration of such a noteworthy career, I would like to relay a message from Congressman Wexler:

With an infectious smile and positive spirit, Wendi Lipsich has been a public servant in the truest sense for three decades. Wendi has helped countless people solve problems big and small. Everyone—and I mean everyone—loves Wendi. And for a good reason. Wendi personifies impeccable character and integrity. What joy it was for me to work alongside Wendi for 15+ years. The people of Palm Beach and Broward Counties owe Wendi enormous gratitude for her never-end-

ing dedication and kindness. Wendi is one of a kind, amazing!

Immediately after Congressman Wexler retired, she was hired as the District Director for my predecessor and friend, former Congressman Ted Deutch, from 2010 to 2022. Congressman Deutch had this to say about Wendi:

Wendi is more than the district director. She is and will continue to be a good friend to anyone needing assistance. Even if it's not related to Congress, people know Wendi will happily do anything she can to try to help them. She cares so deeply about our community and about all of the talented people she has worked with to help our constituents. Everyone, literally everyone, loves and appreciates Wendi Lipsich.

Mr. Speaker, I have always known Wendi to be a selfless public servant, and I am eternally grateful for her service to the constituents of Florida's 23rd Congressional District.

In addition to enjoying her professional life, Wendi goes above and beyond to give back to her community. She is the founder and Co-Chair of the Boca Raton Lupus Walk with the Alliance for Lupus Research and continues to play an active role in raising awareness and funds to help cure lupus. Wendi has also been the Hillel of Broward and Palm Beach Board Member and Chair of the Student Life Committee, Guardian Ad Litem Child Advocate with the 15th Judicial Circuit of West Palm Beach, Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County, Business and Professional Cabinet Co-Chair and Board Member, KidSafe Foundation Board Member, Spanish River Community High School Foundation Board Member, Junior League of Boca Raton's Volunteer of the Year honoree, Democratic Professionals Council of Palm Beach County, Alliance of Delray Association, Democratic National Convention Delegate and a supporter of many other charities.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in celebrating my friend and colleague, Ms. Wendi Lipsich, as she embarks on the next chapter of her career. I am eternally grateful to her for her years of service to our Nation and wish her all the best.

RECOGNIZING CUSTER GALLATIN FISHERIES BIOLOGIST CLINT SESTRICH FOR EARNING THE OUTSTANDING FISHERIES PROFESSIONAL AWARD FROM THE MONTANA AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY

HON. MATTHEW M. ROSENDALE, SR.

OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Mr. ROSENDALE. Mr. Speaker, Montana's biodiversity and breathtaking natural beauty attract countless researchers and naturalists to our great state. This makes Clint Sestrich's recognition as this year's Outstanding Fisheries Professional by the Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society particularly impressive.

Clint became a member of the fisheries society in 1997 and has led multiple conservation efforts over the past 25 years. He distinguished himself on numerous occasions for his stewardship of Montana's fish populations, including his work on the Upper Shields YCT